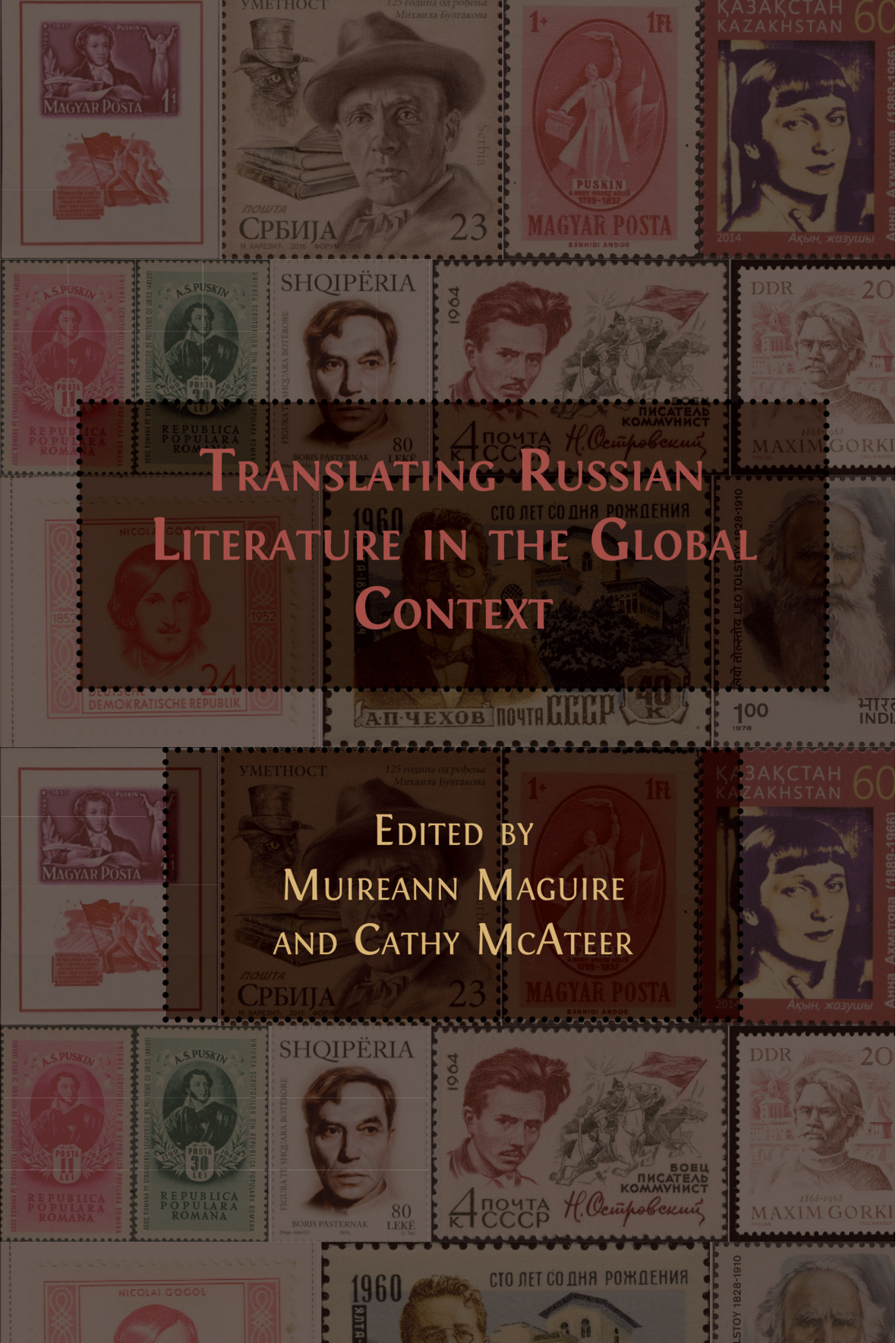

Translating Russian Literature in the Global Context

Edited by
Muireann Maguire
and Cathy McAteer

https://www.openbookpublishers.com

Muireann Maguire and Cathy McAteer (eds), *Translating Russian Literature in the Global Context. Cambridge*, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2024, https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0340

Version 1.1

ISBN Paperback: 978–1-80064–983–5

ISBN Hardback: 978–1-80064–984–2

ISBN Digital (PDF): 978–1-80064–985–9

ISBN Digital ebook (EPUB): 978–1-80064–986–6
ISBN DIGITAL ebook (HTML): 978–1-80064–989–7
DOI: 10.11647/OBP.0340

Cover Design: Jeevanjot Kaur Nagpal

This project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme as part of the RUSTRANS academic project, 'The Dark Side of Translation: 20th and 21st Century Translation from Russian as a Political Phenomenon in the UK, Ireland, and the USA' (grant agreement no. 802437).

Uzbekistan

From Russian to Uzbek (1928–53): Unequal Cultural Transfers and Institutional Supervision under Stalinist Rule

Benjamin Quénu

Sen qancha tillarda sayraysan mag‘rur
Sozing yuksalajak yana baland, shan![1]

You proudly sing in so many languages
Your saz will rise again, glory!

(Oybek, ‘Pushkin’, 1936)[2]

During the Republican Conference on Questions of Literary Translation, held in 1952 in Tashkent, the poet Asqad Muhtor (1920–97) attacked the dramatist and poet Maqsud Shayhzoda (1908–67), who was already under pressure from a harsh personal campaign, accusing the latter of filling his translations of Pushkin

1 The current Uzbek Latin script has been used throughout this chapter, regardless of whether the original document was written in Arabic, early Latin, Cyrillic or present Latin script. This is a mark of respect for contemporary Uzbek research, which uses this convention. Conversely, the Uzbek names and words quoted in Russian-speaking documents follow the LoC transliteration.

2 Muso Oybek, ‘Pushkin’, in Oybek, *Mukammal asarlar to’plami* (*Complete Collected Works*), ed. by Naim Karimov, 20 vols (Tashkent: Fan, 1975–85), II (1975), pp. 38–39. According to this edition, the first publication of the Uzbek text dates back to 1955. Nonetheless, a Russian translation was published in 1937. See Muso Aibek, ‘Pushkin’, *Literaturnyi Uzbekistan*, 1 (1937), p. 144. Unless otherwise indicated, the author of this chapter is also the translator into English of both Uzbek and Russian texts.

 https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0340.34

and Maiakovskii "with Arabic and Persian words foreign to the Uzbek people".[3] This case vividly highlights two distinctive aspects of translation practice at the end of Stalinist rule. As a supervised professional activity, its accuracy was subject to firm control, which could potentially be weaponised against translators. Moreover, in the context of the Cold War and campaign against cosmopolitanism, literary translations from Russian were used to redefine the Uzbek language itself. In this situation, cultural transfers were acquiring a very specific meaning.

Since 2010, the Western historiography of Soviet translation practice has been re-invented. For instance, by focusing on translation as a social activity, Ioana Popa has revealed its contradictory uses: instrumentalised in the soft-power policy of the Soviet Union abroad, and at the same time exploited by writers and translators as a means of resistance or as an alternative form of consecration.[4] More recently, Natalia Kamovnikova has demonstrated how translation created a professional cadre that was simultaneously an autonomous community, thus empowering its members, the translators.[5] This renewal should be connected with debates within the historiography of creative unions. Meant to supervise, foster, fund, and even nurture the creative workers, these organisations were the interface between the demands of the Party and those of Soviet intellectuals. While early works exclusively focused on control exercised over creativity, more recent historiography has highlighted the construction of professional identity within the institution, as well as the agency of these recognised specialists.[6] The case of translation from Russian to Uzbek allows scholars to look beyond these paradoxical—yet not incompatible—dynamics. Different discourses

3 Asqad Muhtor, 'Respublikanskoe Soveshchanie po voprosam khudozhestvennogo perevoda', *Literaturnyi Uzbekistan*, 6 (1952), 84–122 (p. 86).

4 Ioana Popa, *Traduire sous contrainte, littérature et communisme, 1947–1989* (CNRS Éditions: Paris, 2010).

5 Kamovnikova highlighted the role of translation seminars in this process in Natalia Kamovnikova, *Made Under Pressure: Literary Translation in the Soviet Union, 1960–1991* (Amherst and Boston, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2019), pp. 196–269.

6 On the Soviet Writers' Union, see John and Carol Garrard, *Inside the Soviet Writers' Union* (New York: Free Press, 1990); Cécile Vaissié, *Les ingénieurs des âmes en chef : littérature et politique en URSS (1944–1986)* (Paris: Belin, 2008); and Carol Any, *The Soviet Writers' Union and Its Leaders: Identity and Authority under Stalin* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2020). On the agency of musicians within the Union of Soviet Composers, see Kiril Tomoff, *Creative Union, The Professional Union of Composers, 1939–1953* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 2006). On the Soviet Writers' Union of Uzbekistan, see Ingeborg Baldauf, 'Educating the Poets and Fostering Uzbek Poetry of the 1910s to Early 1930s', *Cahiers d'Asie centrale*, 24 (2015), 183–211; Benjamin Quénu, 'Culture et politique dans l'Ouzbékistan soviétique de la Grande Terreur au Dégel (1937–1956): l'Union des Écrivains de la RSS d'Ouzbékistan, une expérience de cogestion du pouvoir et de construction des imaginaires politiques' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Paris-10 Nanterre, 2019).

on translation practices, translation choices, and the unique place of Russian literature in the Uzbek cultural landscape emphasise how the supervision of translation practices has assisted in the construction of a multi-ethnic Soviet culture. In this essay, I will examine some of the collaborations and the conflicts between the agents involved.

The Premises of Institutional Supervision (1932–35)

In pre-Revolutionary Central Asia, translations formed part of Muslim cultural reform, which was carried out by a wide variety of intellectual movements usually grouped under the term *Jadidism*, and therefore highly valued as a means of reclaiming art and civilisation as weapons against the colonial oppressor. Uzbek translations were scarce, but Tatar and Ottoman translations were distributed in Jadid bookshops.[7] The Uzbek term for novel, 'roman', was first used as late as 1912 after the translation of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) into Azeri.[8] After the 1917 Russian Revolution, Jadid writers and translators worked with proletarian writers on Russian to Uzbek translations. Literary journals played a key role in the transmission of ideas and practices between different generations. For instance, during the 1920s, Muso Tashmuhammad o'g'li, commonly known by his pen name Oybek (1904–68), then a promising young poet from the anti-Imperialist circle 'The Star' ('Yulduz'), and the fiercely anti-Soviet Abdulhamid Sulaymon o'g'li, better known by his pen name Cho'lpon (1893–1938), the most influential writer of his generation, both contributed to the Uzbek-language literary journal *The Face of the Earth* (*Yer Yuzi*, 1925–31). During the year 1926, Oybek translated Maksim Gorky's 'Song of the Falcon' ('Pesnia o sokole', 1894) as 'Lochin Qushi Qo'shig'i', while Cho'lpon translated Nikolai Gogol's 'The Overcoat' ('Shinel'', 1842) as 'Shinel', in addition to many short stories from a wider cultural landscape.[9]

In 1932, the Sredazbiuro, the main board of the local Communist Party, based in Samarkand, ordered the dissolution of existing literary associations, and the formation of a creative union to supervise the production of literature in Uzbekistan.[10] This directive had little effect on these associations but quickly led to the formation of the Uzbek Soviet Writers' Union (Soiuz Sovetskikh Pisatelei Uzbekistana, SSPUz), which held its first congress in March 1934. However, from

7 Adeeb Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998), p. 109, p. 117, p. 169.

8 Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform*, p. 127.

9 S. Mamajanov, *O'zbekistonda badiiy tarjima tarixi* (Tashkent: O'zbekiston SSR Fan Nashryoti, 1985), p. 6, p. 116.

10 'Postanovleniia Prezidiuma i prikazy Sredazbiuro VSSP', Tashkent, O'zbekiston Respublikasi Markaziy Davlat Arxivi (O'zRMDA), R 2356, o.1, d. 2, fol. 2r.

its very beginning, the SSPUz showed little interest in supervising translation activity, and did not even create any section specifically dedicated to it.[11]

By contrast, the USSR Union of Writers (SP SSSR), the federal institution, not only set up a translation division, but soon divided it into sections dedicated to specific linguistic areas. In Uzbekistan, commissions and evaluations were shared out among the sections, which were grouped by literary genre (poetry, prose, theatre), and many translations into Uzbek were randomly distributed, whether from Russian or from another language. Translations from Uzbek to Russian were much more centralised as, regardless of genre, they were placed under the control of the Russian literature section. They even benefited from systematic publication in the Russian-speaking press of the Uzbek Soviet Writers' Union 'Literary Uzbekistan' ('Literaturnyi Uzbekistan', 1935–41), which met approximately bimonthly during this time. Translations into Russian, the dominant language and thus a powerful instrument of legitimation for a dominated culture, were already formalised, although they were, at least in Uzbekistan, controlled by the periphery instead of the dominating centre.[12]

By contrast, during the mid-1930s, the SSPUz still exercised little control over Russian-to-Uzbek literary translations. Nor did the translators working from Russian to Uzbek receive commissions unless they were writers themselves, resulting in a loss of professional recognition and material advantages. As for the commissions, most of them did not directly emanate from the Soviet Writers' Union, but from magazines, some of which were the publishing arm of the Union, like *The Literature of Soviet Uzbekistan* (*O'zbekistan Shora Adabiyoti*, 1933–34) and its many sequels. Others were much more autonomous, like the successors to the above-mentioned *Yer Yuzi*, the most important of these being *The Flower Garden* (*Guliston*, 1935–41), and *The Fist* (*Mushtum*, 1923-), the Uzbek satirical magazine, sometimes erroneously compared to the Russian *Crocodile* (*Krokodil*, 1922–2008).[13]

In this loose institutional context, until the mid-1930s, Uzbek translators enjoyed great freedom in their choices. Cho'lpon was even able to use the very act of translating as a subtle act of protest in *Mushtum.* In his translation of the short stories of Boris Cheprunov, a local Russian novelist, he emphasised the hidden meaning of his animal fable, *Miyoviddin Mirzo* (1935).[14] Cheprunov discreetly criticised Soviet power: his fable was ostensibly set during the so-called 'tyranny

11 'Stenograficheskii otchët I-go respublikanskogo s''ezda Soiuza pisatelei Uzbekistana'. O'zRMDA, R 2356, o.1, d. 2a.

12 As Pascale Casanova has demonstrated, translation into a dominant language—what she calls the world language—*adds value* to the translated text instead of devaluing it. See Pascale Casanova, *La langue mondiale: traduction et domination* (Paris: Le Seuil, 2015), p. 14.

13 See S. Mamajanov, '20 yillar O'zbek tarjimachiligi', in *O'zbekistonda badiiy tarjima tarixi* (Tashkent: O'zbekiston SSR Fan Nashryoti, 1985), pp. 6–29.

14 Sherali Turdiev, 'Boris Cheprunovning fojiali qismati', *O'zbekiston adabiyoti va san'ati*, 51 (2007), 2 (p. 2).

of the khans' (the Uzbek khanate of Kokand). Indirectly, however, it attacked the excesses of Soviet power, and its anti-colonial sentiment echoed Cho'lpon's own sentiments. Cheprunov would later be critiqued for his anti-Soviet tendencies, denounced as an Uzbek nationalist—although he was Russian—and shot.

Plays generally developed from collaboration between a theatre director and a translator. For example, Qodiriy's translations of Gogol's two-act comedy *The Marriage* (*Zhenit'ba*, 1832) as *Uylanish* (1935) and Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* (*Vishnevyi sad*, 1904) as *Olchazor* (1936), were the fruit of his artistic cooperation with the director Kamol Ilham in the Uzbek National Academic Dramatic Theatre (O'zbekiston Milliy akademik drama teatri).[15] Two now almost forgotten literati who were trying to reach the most respected ranks via their translation activity, Sanjar Siddiq and A'zam Ayub (Aiupov in some documents), were involved in many of these translations, of both Russian pre-Revolutionary and Soviet playwrights. For instance, Siddiq translated Nikolai Pogodin's play about Soviet industrialism *My Friend* (*Moi drug*, 1932) as *Mening do'stim* (1934), and Nikolai Gogol's *The Government Inspector* (*Revizor*, 1836) as *Revizor* (1935). Cho'lpon judged this latter play opaque to a non-speaker of Russian, thus advocating for a target-oriented translation, and showing his acute awareness of the linguistic risks associated with repeated contact with the Russian language.[16]

This tireless translation of the Russian classics should not obfuscate Uzbek writers' wider interest, predating the Revolution, in European literature and theatre. Despite their anti-colonial views, Muslim reformists had long studied modern European drama in order to promote their own ideology.[17] From this perspective, translation activity helped to accumulate cultural capital, a process which continued after the 1917 Revolution. The first play translated into Uzbek in Soviet Tashkent was the German dramatist Friedrich Schiller's *Cabal and Love* (*Kabale und liebe,* 1784), as *Makr va muhabbat*, directed by Kamol Ilham in the theatre later named after Hamza in 1921. The translator, the poet Shamsiddin Sharafiddin o'g'li, known as Xurshid (1892–1960), had been a contributor to the local Jadid press, including journals such as the appropriately named *Translator* (*Tarjimon*) and *The Mirror* (*Oyna*), since the beginning of the First World War. Schiller had been popular in the Russian Empire since the nineteenth century. He remained part of the Soviet patrimony, as he was long considered a poet of emancipation, with the social aspects of his works highlighted by Gorky.[18] Xurshid thus easily found a Russian translation on which to base his own. The playwright's popularity in Uzbekistan was therefore facilitated by his works'

15 Naim Karimov, 'Abdulla Qodiriy—tarjimon', *Jahon adabiyoti*, 4 (2014), 89–95 (p. 89).

16 Abdulhamid Cho'lpon, 'Ko'lagada qolg'onlar to'ghrisida', *Qizil O'zbekiston,* 10 May 1935, 4 (p. 4).

17 Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform*, pp. 129–33.

18 Edmund Kostka, 'The Vogue of Schiller in Russia and in the Soviet Union', *The German Quarterly*, 36:1 (1963), 2–13 (10).

previous circulation in the Russian and Soviet Empire and by the Marxist analysis of his plays, besides local anti-colonial reinterpretations of his call for freedom. His reputation was so high that Ayub, probably influenced by the success of the play on the stage in Moscow since 1930, wrote a new translation for the Hamza Theatre in 1935.[19]

The extensive use of Russian as an intermediary language during this period illustrates the quest to expand cultural capital, as well as reinforcing the dominant position of Russian. Cho'lpon translated *Hamlet* for the Uzbek director Mannon Uyg'ur in 1934, while Sanjar Siddiq staged Goldoni's *The Mistress of the Inn* (*La locandiera*, 1753) as *Mehmonxona bekasi* (1935), and Lope de Vega's *Fuenteovejuna* (1619) as *Qo'zibuloq qishlog'i* (1935). The interest in the latter was connected to the rise of Spanish studies in Moscow. Sanzhar Siddiq used the translation that had been published some weeks before by Sergei S. Ignatov, who was both translating and analysing Spanish classics from a Marxist perspective.[20] Although such translations were related to Muscovite publications and interests in this way, they were not the result of any top-down Soviet translation policy. The case of *Fuenteovejuna* therefore indicates the intensity of the cultural exchanges between the centre and the periphery, rather than any attempt to supervise: translators appropriated the dominant culture for their own needs and did not limit themselves to Russian literature. Using the concepts coined by Casanova in her 'Consécration et accumulation de capital littéraire, la traduction comme échange inégal', one could say they conscientiously used a "translation-accumulation" strategy, completing the intensive "translation-consecration" policy led by the SSPUz and *Literaturnyi Uzbekistan*.[21] The pre-Revolutionary anti-colonial translation strategy here melded with the Soviet desire to become the legitimate heir and custodian of world literature.[22]

The Uzbek language was not at this time very standardised. In 1932, the Fifth Plenary Session of the Uzbek Communist Party voted on a first normative measure, standardising the language used in translations of Marxist-Leninist classics, imposing Russian words for many political concepts, replacing the Turkish 'jumhuriyat' with 'respublika', and making Russian technical terms like 'doklad' (report) mandatory, and thus reinforcing Russian-language dominance

19 Sotimboi Tursunboev, *Jahon teatri tarixi* (Tashkent: O'zbekiston Respublikasi olii va O'rta Maxsus Ta'lim Vazirligi, 2008), p. 269.

20 Ludmilla B. Turkevich, 'Status of Spanish Studies in the Soviet Union', *Hispania*, 41:4 (1958), 485–90 (p. 485).

21 Pascale Casanova, 'Consécration et accumulation de capital littéraire. La traduction comme échange inégal', *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences sociales*, 144 (2002), 7–20 (p. 9).

22 On Soviet claims to mediate world culture, see Katerina Clark, *Moscow, the Fourth Rome: Stalinism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Evolution of Soviet Culture, 1931–1941* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), pp. 9–11.

in strategic publications.[23] Nonetheless, despite the publication of a very short Russian-Uzbek dictionary in Kazan in 1934, these measures barely affected literary translation.

Translating Pushkin, an Act of Allegiance? (1935–37)

The first firm institutional supervision of literary translations from the Russian language arose in 1936, as a result of the Pushkin jubilee decreed in 1935. Russian literary historiography has thoroughly emphasised the jubilee's scope and significance within Russian culture, but has conversely overlooked its significance on both the Soviet and global scales. Yet, from the start, the basic structure of the All-Soviet Committee dedicated to the Pushkin jubilee reflected a determination to involve the Soviet peripheries in the celebration, as half of its members represented Soviet Socialist Republics. Sadriddin Ayni (1874–1954), who is usually considered a founding father of both the Uzbek and the Tajik novel, was one such member.[24] At this time, he was still influential in the Uzbek Soviet Writers' Union, which he encouraged to establish its own Jubilee Commission. From 1936, writers and translators met more frequently under the supervision of the SSPUz. Their main role was to decide which of Aleksandr Pushkin's works should be translated, and by whom. They organised strict plans, orders, publication objectives, and evaluations of all drafts submitted.[25] Unfortunately, the surviving documentation of their efforts is sparse and poorly conserved. The existence of such a commission, however, demonstrates that translations were now subject to the same procedural control as creative works. For the first time, the act of translating was planned and directed from above, and local institutions were enlisted to fulfil the demands of a central policy. The jubilee had deep institutional consequences, as it established a model for other All-Soviet jubilees, each of which must now also be directed by a committee specific to each republic, and composed of high-ranking and district-level Party officials, writers, and composers.[26] Translations were still not centralised, but there was such a succession of special events one after another that the

23 William Fierman, *Language Planning and National Development: The Uzbek Experience* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1991), p. 158.

24 *Vlast' i khudozhestvennaia intelligentsiia, Dokumenty CK RKP(b) VKP(b), VChK - OGPU - NKVD o kul'turnoi politike 1917–1953*, ed. by Andrei Artizov and Oleg Naumov (Rospen: Moscow, 1999), p. 219.

25 'Protokoly zasedanii komiteta pro provleniiu stoletnogo iubilieia so dnia smerti Pushkina, spisok proizvedenii, izdavaemykh Gosizdatom na uzbekskom iazyke', Tashkent, O'zRMDA, R-2356, o. 1, d. 13, fol. 14r. .

26 'Sostav iubileinogo komiteta Lermontogo', Tashkent, O'zRMDA, R-2356, o. 1, d. 63, fol. 75r.

exception became the norm, and a *de facto* permanent supervision prevailed. The celebration of Pushkin was followed by the jubilees of the Georgian poet Shota Rustaveli (which was prepared from 1935 to 1938), of Vladimir Maiakovskii (1939–40), and of Mikhail Lermontov (1938–41) respectively, with each occasion involving its own translation commission.[27] Meanwhile, the all-Soviet millennium of the Armenian epic poem 'The Daredevils of Sassoun' ('Sasna Tsrer') was commemorated in 1939.[28]

The jubilee model was not exclusively used for promoting classic Russian literature. Moreover, every translation of selected samples of literature from the multinational Soviet Union had an Uzbek counterpart: for instance, there was the preparation for the jubilee of the Timurid (considered Uzbek) poet Alisher Nava'i, whose works were due to be translated into all languages of the Soviet Union until the war intervened.[29] Historians have thoroughly debated the Stalinist policy of promoting Russian classics, often characterising it as a means of producing a shared cultural medium while fixing standards of *kulturnost'* ('cultural level'), thus implying a struggle against 'cultural backwardness'.[30] Taken with these examples from other Soviet Republics' cultures, in the Uzbek context this Stalinist policy appears during the mid-1930s more as an experiment in a multinational culture than an assertion of Russian cultural imperialism. The

27 'Postanovleniia Soveta Narodnykh Komissarov Uzbekskoj SSR, protokoly zasedaniia komisii po provediniiu iubileia velikogo gruzinskogo poėta Shota Rustaveli (7 aprelia 1935–13 fevralia 1938)', O'zRMDA, R-2356, o. 1, d. 8, fols 1r-22r; 'Stikhi M.Iu. Lermontova, namechanye dlia perevoda na uzbekskii iazyk', O'zRMDA, R-2356, o. 1, d. 63, fols. 134r-137r; 'Protokol n°5 Zasedaniia Pravleniia Soiuza Sov. Pisatelei Uzb. 31-go marta 1940', O'zRMDA, R-2356, o. 1, d. 63, fols. 64r-65r.

28 'Postanovleniia Prezidiuma Pravleniia Soiuza Sovetskikh Pisatelei o sozyve iubileinogo Plenuma SSP SSSR v gorode Erevane v sviazi s prazdnovaniem 1000 letnego arm'ianskogo narodnogo ėposa "David Sasunskii", protokol zasedaniia iubileinoi komissii (27 avgusta-9 sentiabria 1939)', O'zRMDA, R-2356, o. 1, d. 50.

29 During the 1930s, Soviet orientalists and Uzbek writers declared the fifteenth-century Turkic poet Alisher Nava'i the official founding father of Uzbek literature, thus consolidating a long process of nationalisation begun by the Jadids. On the role of orientalists, see Marc Toutant, 'De l'indigénisation soviétique au panturquisme académique, Un cas de transfert culturel ambigu', *European Journal of Turkish Studies*, 22 (2016), 2–21 (2–3); Boram Shin, 'Inventing a National Writer: The Soviet Celebration of the 1948 Alisher Nava'i Jubilee and the Writing of the Uzbek History', *International Journal of Asian Studies*, 14.2 (2017), 117–42; on the specific role of writers in this nationalisation, see Benjamin Quénu, 'Culture et politique dans l'Ouzbékistan soviétique', pp. 220–57. The translation planning is recorded in 'Postanovlenie Soveta Narodnykh Kommisarov Uzbekskoi SSR o xode podgotvoki k 500 letnomu iubileiu Alishera Navoi', O'zRMDA, R-2356, o. 1, d. 49, fols. 36r-37r.

30 On global Soviet policy, see Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 2001), pp. 126–32.

Russian model nevertheless affected writers' statuses and writing practices, and Russian literature remained the main referent. When the poet Hamid Olimjon (1909–44) and the novelist G'afur G'ulom (1903–66), both promoters of Socialist Realism, became the principal translators of Maiakovskii for the latter's jubilee, Hamid Olimjon was soon called "the Uzbek Maiakovskii", while G'afur G'ulom, head of the committee that had organised the translation, immediately borrowed the Soviet poet's famous percussive style for his own poetry.[31] In the same way, the quality of the prose of Abdulla Qahhor earned him the title of the "Uzbek Chekhov", an association that he encouraged further in his assertion that Chekhov was his 'domla'—his 'master'.[32]

Although strongly encouraged by central authorities, Pushkin's jubilee celebrations themselves soon acquired an ambiguous significance. Although they may initially have been conceived as a demonstration of allegiance and as promotion of Russian culture, the discourse and choices of early translators of Pushkin's works cast doubt on such an interpretation of the ceremonies. The first Uzbek translator of Pushkin's poetry and novels, Cho'lpon, was still openly anti-colonial. He chose to translate *Boris Godunov*, where the titular usurper's path to power is soaked with the blood of the Tsar's true heir, at the time he was publishing his *Night* (*Kecha*, 1936), an historical novel set during the 1916 Central Asian revolt against conscription.[33] As for the young lyrical poet Usmon Nosir (1912–44), he expressed mild criticism of contemporary Soviet policy. He translated Pushkin's poem 'The Fountain of Bakhchisarai' ('Boqchasoroy fontani', 1936), a choice certainly dictated by the Asian setting of the plot.[34] Oybek's political stance was ambiguous. Although he had participated in proletarian circles, he was an outspoken admirer and defender of more suspect writers, including Qodiriy and Cho'lpon, and was therefore also regarded with suspicion.[35] He opted to translate Pushkin's masterpiece, *Evgenii Onegin* (1825–1832). Drafts of his translation, kept in his former home (now a dedicated museum), show his lengthy research process. Oybek separated all individual alphabetical characters of his draft in order to allow for word

31 'Protokol n°5 zasedaniia Pravlenia Soiuza Sov. Pisatelei Uzbekistana, 31 marta 1940 g.', O'zRMDA, R-2356, o. 1, d. 63, fol. 64r.

32 Abdulla Qahhor, *O'tmishdan Ertaklar* (Tashkent: Yosh Gvardiya, 1976), p. 41.

33 Shawn T. Lyons, 'Resisting Colonialism in the Uzbek Historical Novel "Kecha va Kunduz (Night and Day)", 1936', *Inner Asia*, 3–2 (2001), 175–92 (176).

34 Aleksandr Pushkin, *Boqchasoroi Fontani*, trans. by Usmon Nosir (Tashkent: Gosizdat, 1936).

35 Muso Oybek, 'Cho'lpon, shoirni qanday tekshirish kerak', *Qizil O'zbekiston*, 17 May 1927, p. 2; Muso Oybek, *Abdulla Qodiriyning ijodii yo'li* (Tashkent: O'zbekiston Fanlar komiteti nashriëti, 1936); Adeeb Khalid, *Making Uzbekistan, Nation, Empire in the Early USSR* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 2015), pp. 334–36; Benjamin Quénu, 'Culture et politique dans l'Ouzbékistan soviétique', pp. 95–98.

changes and permutations.[36] In key passages, the drafts offer evidence of his search for the right words and metrical accuracy. Although he placed himself under pressure, the result was indisputably successful, and set high standards for future versions. His accuracy demonstrated both professionalism, fidelity to the source author, and loyalty to Soviet power. The final version is not a literal translation; Oybek had to find an adaptation strategy to express the freedom of his interpretation. Like many others, he wrote a poem dedicated to Pushkin prior to the jubilee, which is quoted in the epigraph to this chapter, above. Like Cho'lpon, he did not praise Pushkin as the genius who gave birth to the Russian literary canon.[37] Instead, he emphasised Pushkin's struggle, as a poet, against an unfair political regime. This part of the Pushkin cult was certainly not new, as the Russian intelligentsia had cast him as a model of resistance since the middle of the nineteenth century.[38] It also had specific contemporary resonances in 1937 when it was published in Russian.[39] In this poem, Oybek portrayed Pushkin as a multilingual poet "crushing" tyranny—resisting tyranny with his verse—by opening an imaginary country to the reader. Oybek ended the poem with some distinctly ambiguous lines of verse: "The free homeland reads you with felicity / You proudly sing in so many languages / Your saz will rise again, glory!"[40] The "free homeland" referred to the Soviet Union, but also to Uzbekistan, and these lines clearly indicated that its ultimate identity was supranational, poetry itself. Moreover, the last verse bore a strong intertextuality with Cho'lpon's 'I play my saz again' ('Yana o'ldim sozimni', 1934).[41] Oybek attributed the saz, or traditional lute, to Pushkin, merging him implicitly with Cho'lpon, who had been his first translator; Oybek had already compared them in an earlier article.[42] As Cho'lpon seemed vulnerable when the poem was first published in Russian, this

36 Oybek uy-muzeyi, KP-7735.

37 Muso Oybek, 'Pushkin', in Oybek, *Mukammal asarlar to'pladi* (*Complete Collected Works*), II (1975), pp. 38–39 (p. 39). The Uzbek original was published only after the death of Stalin, which confirms this assumption.

38 Ol'ga Murav'ëva, 'Obraz Pushkina: istoricheskie metamorfosy', in *Legendy i mify o Pushkine*, ed. by Maria Virolainen (Sankt-Peterburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 1995), 106–28 (118–22); Marina Zagidullina, *Pushkinskii mif v kontse XX veka* (Cheliabinsk: Cheliabinsk State University Press, 2001); Stephanie Sandler, *Commemorating Pushkin: Russia's Myth of a National Poet* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004); Marina Zagidullina, 'At the crossroads between the elite and the masses cults: Pushkin's Middle Path in Russian culture', *Neohelicon*, 46 (2019), 183–97.

39 Muso Oybek, 'Pushkin', *Literaturnyi Uzbekistan*, 1 (1937), p. 142.

40 "Ila seni o'qir bu erkin Vatan / Sen qancha tillarda sayraysan mag'rur / Sozing yuksalajak yana baland, shan!". The last word, "*shan*", is also present in both Oybek's poem and Cho'lpon's.

41 Abdulhamid Cho'lpon, 'Yana o'ldim sozimni', *Yana o'ldim sozimni* (Tashkent: G'afur G'ulom nomidagi Adabiyot va san'at nashriyoti, 1991), p. 119.

42 Muso Oybek, 'Cho'lpon, shoirni qanday tekshirish kerak', *Qizil O'zbekiston*, 17 May 1927, 2 (p. 2).

was a bold move: although the translation of Pushkin was strictly supervised, Oybek had developed a strategy of resistance in his metadiscourse, using a coded language, which shed more light on his own translation. Meanwhile, Ayni, the actual organiser of the Pushkin jubilee, went even further, and allowed himself to publicly mock the vacuity of censorship in his eulogy written in Tajik:

> Censorship tried with all her might to hide
> The poet's marvellous treasure from the light
> But who will hold back the vividness of the years
> Who will capture the fragrance of spring?
> The pages blackened by censorship
> From mouth to mouth flew lighter than a bird
> The poet's lips cannot be sealed.[43]

Familiar with double discourse, Ayni might have been evoking his own poetry here, in a subtly subversive way.

As translation became more professionalised, the question of evaluating translation quality also arose. The Uzbek reception of the conclusions of the First All-Soviet Congress of Translators, held in Moscow in January 1936, indicates some criteria for this appraisal. The conclusions of this inaugural event, where prominent writers and translators shared their theories about the best way to achieve translation accuracy, were discussed in Tashkent in early February. A speech by the prominent orientalist Evgenii Bertel´s, already famous for his 1935 study of the Persian poet Ferdowsi, about translation issues specific to Turkic and Persian languages failed to raise much interest, perhaps because his thesis was not new in Uzbekistan.[44] This display of loyalty on the part of suspect specialists trying to use ideological criteria to justify their work did not encounter much support in Tashkent. Writers and translators paid much more attention to the discourse of the former Acmeist poet Mikhail Zenkevich, now working exclusively as a translator. As Zenkevich defended the interests of translators as a corporation, Uzbek translators demanded the same professional recognition.[45] They also discussed at length the ideas of Aleksandr Smirnov, a Shakespeare specialist, who defined the accuracy of a translation by the similarity of the

43 The poem was first issued in its Russian translation: "Tsenzura vsemi tselami ot sveta / Ukryt' stremilas' divnyj klad poèta. / No kto uderzhit virkhia bujnyi let? Kto aromat vesennyi v plen voz'mët? Tsenzuroi zachërnennye stranitsy / Iz ust v usta leteli legche ptitsy. Na rot pevtsa ne nalozhit' pechat'". Sadreddin Aini, 'Pushkin', trans. by Banu, *Literaturnyi Uzbekistan*, 1 (1937), 53–56.

44 On Zenkevich, see E. E. Zemskova, 'Strategii Loial'nasti:diskussiia o tochnosti khudozhestvennogo perevoda na Pervom vsesoiuznom soveshanii perevodchikov 1936 g.', *Novyi filologicheskii vestnik*, 4 (2015), 70–83 (p. 74).

45 'Protokol zasedaniâ prezidiuma Uzsovprosa, tezisa k dokladam P. Zenkevicha "Perevodchik i Izdatel'stvo", M. Lozinskogo "Iskusstvo Stixotvornogo Perevoda" i A. Smirnova "Zadachi k sredsvta khudozhestvennogo perevoda"', O'zRMDA, R-2356, o. 1, d. 12, fols. 6r-17r.

effect produced on the reader, a perspective one would call target-oriented in modern Translation Studies, which recalls and predates Western research on the "principle of equivalent effect" formalised by Émile Victor Rieu in 1953, as well as Eugene Nida's 1964 notion of "dynamic equivalence".[46] Smirnov's views were warmly received in SSPUz; opposing voices relied on source-oriented translation discourses. These debates encouraged local theories, and a few months later, Sanjar Siddiq elaborated his own criteria of accuracy in *The Art of Literary Translation* (*Adabiy tarjima san'ati*, 1936).[47] Unlike those in the Soviet centre, Uzbek translators set ideology aside during these debates, where scientific and aesthetic criteria dominated.

The Effect of the Great Terror (1937–38)

One year later, the Uzbek intelligentsia was seriously affected by the Great Terror, especially those former Muslim reformists who had contributed to the building of Socialism.[48] Translation activity was affected in many ways. First, prominent writers accused of nationalism tended to use their translation efforts as a defence strategy. Cho'lpon had no other option, since he lacked influential protectors. Until late 1937, the literary critic and journalist Rahmat Majidiy (1906–86), and the editor-in-chief of the SSPUz magazine, Aleksandr Kartsev (1901-?), who was also (from 1935) in charge of the Culture and Propaganda Department of the Central Committee in Uzbekistan, had defended him. Kartsev, as editor-in-chief of *Literaturnyi Uzbekistan*, commissioned the translation of long extracts from his masterpiece *Night*.[49] During the spring of 1937, external pressure mounted and the journal's editorial board was heavily critiqued; the Uzbek Soviet Writers' Union banned Cho'lpon. On 7 and 8 April 1937, having endured a harsh session of self-criticism, Cho'lpon tried to dismiss the accusations of nationalism being levelled at him. A document held in the State Archive summarises his intervention, rather than providing a full transcript (because Cho'lpon defended himself in Uzbek, while the stenographer was Russian); but his core argument can be readily deduced. He stressed that his activity as a translator proved his loyalty to the Party, since he was the first Uzbek translator of Pushkin, whose jubilee had just occurred, and (more surprisingly) since he

46 Émile Victor Rieu and John Bertram Phillips, 'Translating the Gospels: A Discussion Between Dr. E.V. Rieu and the Rev. J.B. Phillips', *The Bible Translator*, 6:4 (1955), 150–59; Eugene Nida, *Toward a Science of Translating* (Leiden: Brill, 1964), pp. 120–45.

47 S. Mamajanov, *O'zbekistonda badiiy tarjima tarixi*, pp. 33–34.

48 'Spisok lits podlezhashchikh sudu voennoi kollegii verkhovnogo suda Soiuza SSR 28-go marta', *Repressiia 1937–38*, *Dokumenty i materialy T.1*, ed. by Naim Karimov (Tashkent: Sharq, 2005), pp. 215–22.

49 Abdulhamid Cho'lpon, *Nochi* (*roman*), *Literaturnyi Uzbekistan*, 2 (1937), 52–128.

was the first Uzbek translator of *Hamlet*.[50] These facts indicated that he was not a bourgeois nationalist. This defence, based on the Soviet myth of the friendship of peoples, proved inadequate. Not only was Cho'lpon's exclusion from the Writers' Union upheld, he was later arrested too. Nonetheless, his defence was observed with interest by his peers; it showed that translation was, from this date onwards, seen as a legitimating activity in its own right. Russian classics, and particularly those by Pushkin, were included in a wider range of prestigious European literary works for translation.

The case of the young poet Usmon Nosir (1912–44), arrested and deported in 1938, follows the same pattern. It is not known if his translation activity was taken into account as an extenuating circumstance in 1938 during his expulsion from the Uzbek Soviet Writers' Union, but it was presented as the main argument for his rehabilitation when this was discussed in 1942. The evacuation of key resources and figures had put the Writers' Union in a strong position, so the members of the Presidium of the Uzbek Soviet Writers' Union, from Hamid Olimjon to G'afur G'ulom, risked sending Maqsud Shayhzoda to plead his case before the Military Court of the Central Asian District (SAVO).[51] They began by composing a collective letter, flattering Nosir's lyrical skills: "From 1933 to 1938, Usmon Nosir was one of the most talented and progressive poets of our time [...]". They minimised his faults: "But with time, around 1935–1936, themes full of black sadness and inconsolable despair, inspired by the social environment he frequented, began to dominate his work". To counterbalance this, once again, the clinching argument was the quality of his translation from two classic Russian authors commemorated across the Soviet Union during the late 1930s: "In addition to poetic composition, Usmon Nosir also worked as a translator. His translations of Pushkin's 'Fountain of Bakhchisarai' and Lermontov's 'Demon' are particularly noteworthy".[52] This attempt failed, as Usmon Nosir died before the commission was held, but it shows how Uzbek elites had integrated translation practices into their discursive strategies during the Great Terror. This contribution to the friendship of peoples, itself a construct intended to keep the Soviet Empire united, thus became the ultimate evidence of loyalty.

The Great Terror had immediate consequences for both translators and available translations. An immediate menace was the execution of numerous skilled linguists and translators—some also prominent writers, like Cho'lpon and the novelist Abdulla Qodiriy, as well as Sanjar Siddiq and A'zam Ayub. As elsewhere in the USSR, translations made by an arrested translator were suppressed on suspicion of ideological flaws. By contrast, original creative

50 'Stenogramma vystupleniia Cholpana na sobranii pisatelei 7–8 aprelia 1937', O'zRMDA, R-2356, o. 1, d. 29, fols. 1r-14v.

51 Benjamin Quénu, 'Culture et politique dans l'Ouzbékistan soviétique', pp. 382–85.

52 'V voennuiu prokuraturu SAVO—O tvorchestve poèta Nasyrova Usmana', O'zRMDA, R-2356, o. 1, d. 98, fols. 22r-24r.

writing by accused individuals simply ceased to be published; this differential between suppression and interruption underlined the comparably high status of the translator. A few days after the executions of early October 1938, Glavrepertkom (the central Soviet commission for approval of theatrical repertoires) suppressed all plays translated by "bourgeois nationalists" recently sentenced to death.[53] Not only had Uzbek literature lost the works of Qodiriy and Cho'lpon, the founding fathers of entire literary genres (especially the historical novel), it was also deprived of translations of plays previously recognised as part of the Soviet patrimony and '*kulturnost*''. Both Gogol's *The Marriage* and Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, which had been great successes on stage, were removed in Tashkent and in provincial theatres. Lev Slavin and Nikolai Pogodin's plays, although considered as perfect samples of Soviet culture, also disappeared from the stage just after their translators were condemned. The purge culminated in the expulsion from the Hamza Theatre of the director Mannon Uyghur (1897–1955), who had produced most of these plays.[54]

Three years later, the Uzbek Soviet Writers' Union took advantage of a moment of thaw to constitute a commission, led by the writer and scholar Maqsud Shayhzoda, to supervise the rapid production of new translations.[55] Aiming to fill these gaps, Shayhzoda prioritised the retranslation of classic texts, but he faced difficult choices. As the condemned translations had been attacked for their alterations, he promoted strict accuracy, applying this rule equally to his own translations, which adhered to the original as closely as possible. This strategy was supposed to protect the translators for whom he was responsible, and therefore himself, from accusations of disloyalty; and to distinguish new retranslations from the previous, condemned versions. Abdulla Qahhor, Maqsud Shayhzoda, Oybek, and G'afur G'ulom were all closely involved in this process, but it took a decade for the Uzbek theatrical repertoire to recover from this crisis; nor was it the last to occur. As a result, the target-oriented theory that prevailed until the late 1930s was lost.

European playwrights, translated via Russian as an intermediary language, were even more problematic. The case of *Hamlet* is relevant: the 1933 translation by Mikhail Lozinskii (1886–1955) could no longer be used because Cho'lpon had worked on it; while the very poetic 1939 version by Anna Radlova (1891–1949) departed too drastically from the original. Therefore, no safe literary translation was available in Russian. Maqsud Shayhzoda had to wait for Boris Pasternak's 1940 translation, which was praised for its accuracy, to produce his *Hamlet*. He was interrupted by war, but this first attempt had a strong influence over his

53 Tashkent, Institut Isskustvoznaniia im. Hamzy ANUzSSR, T(M) I90 325/22, *Materialy po istorii uzbekskogo teatra,* T. 2, fol. 3r.

54 See Ildar Mukhtarov, 'Mannon Uygur: Episodes From A Career in The Theatre', *San'at,* 3–4 (2007), 71–76.

55 'Protokol n°6 zasedaniia Pravleniia Soiuza Sovetskikh Pisatelei Uzb., 21-ogo maia 1941', *Postanovlenie i Protokoly zasedanii Pravleniia Soiuza Sovetskih Pisatelei Uzbekistana*, O'zRMDA, R-2356, o.1, d. 84, fol. 13r.

own writing, especially the play *Jalaliddin* (1944), which included numerous speeches to the audience, extensive stage directions, and a long soliloquy.[56] When he finally translated *Hamlet* in 1948, Maqsud Shayhzoda opted for literalism, as a guarantee of ideological rectitude, whereas Cho'lpon had preferred concision, deliberately eliding some passages.[57] This is paradoxical, as Pasternak defined his own version as a "free translation" to avoid any accusation of formalism.[58] The ideological rectitude of any translation was thus acquiring a very different meaning in both the Russian centre and the Uzbek periphery: translations into the dominant language were expected to be an act of creation, while translations into a dominated language were expected to adhere as closely as possible to the original.[59]

In 1938, at the peak of the Great Terror, the question of accuracy was at the centre of the defence of Lidiia Sotserdotova, a translator of contemporary Uzbek literature since 1930. She was the translator of Qodiriy's *Obid-Ketmon* and *Scorpion from the Altar* (*Mehrobdan Chayon*, 1928), both commissions by the Uzbek Soviet Writers' Union; her versions had even appeared in *Literaturnyi Uzbekistan*, the Union's official Russian-language organ.[60] She was now accused by her peers of translating both incorrectly. Sotserdotova argued that she had been ordered to translate these works, while also emphasising her professional practices: "I strove for accuracy in translation. I did not hide nor change the political tendencies of any author".[61]

Professional skills could therefore be opposed to ideological accusations with some expectation of success, since Sotserdotova escaped punishment.

The SSPUz reacted to the vacuum created by the Great Terror of 1938 by commissioning new translations, but did not reinforce its control over the process. This institution was too disorganised by the attacks—its president, Hamid Olimjon, was even accused of being a German spy just before the outbreak of war—to muster sufficient human resources.[62] Therefore, translation

56 Maqsud Shayhzoda, *Jaloliddin Manguberdi Tarixiy drama* (*Urganch: Xorazm nashr matbaa, 2022*); Maksud Shaixzade, *Dzhalaleddin*, trans. by Vladimir Lipko, O'zRMDA, R-2356, o. 1, d. 109, fols. 66r-112v.

57 Muhammajon Kholbekov, 'Shekspir bepoyon' ('Boundless Shakespeare'), *O'zbekiston adabiyoti va san'ati gazetasining*, 9 (2009), 4 (p. 4).

58 Susanna Witt, 'Between the Lines', in *Contexts*, *Subtexts and Pretexts*: *Literary Translation in Eastern Europe and Russia*, ed. by Brian James Baer (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2011), pp. 149–70 (p. 165).

59 The condemnation of literalism as a formalist approach and the evolution toward free translation in translations into the Russian language have been described in Natalia Kamovnikova, *Made Under Pressure: Literary Translation in the Soviet Union, 1960–1991*, pp. 171–86.

60 See Abdulla Kadirii, 'Berdi-tatar', *Literaturnyi Uzbekistan*, 1 (1935), 40–47.

61 'Ia stremilas' k tochnosti perevoda, zamaskirovaniem ia ne zanimalas' i nikogda ne naviazyvala avtoram politicheskikh tendentsii', 'Protokol n°1 sobraniia russkoi sekcii s aktivnom ot 19-go oktobria 1937', O'zRMDA, R-2356, o. 1, d. 27, fol. 3r.

62 On the last attack upon Hamid Olimjon, see Charles David Shaw, 'Making Ivan Uzbek: War, Friendship of the Peoples, and the Creation of Soviet Uzbekistan,

activity remained mostly the preserve of dilettantes. Abdulla Qohhar (1907–68) even noted in 1939 that forty works by his beloved Anton Chekhov had been translated by amateurs. Instead of criticising the lesser quality of the translations, he rejoiced at their large-scale dissemination, since they proved Uzbek readers' enthusiasm for the Russian author.[63]

The Birth of the Translation Section (1940): Between Control and Agency

The Great Terror had created a need for new translations from Russian, and turned accuracy in translation into a survival strategy. But it did not mark a foundational moment in the imposition of institutionalised supervision. A dedicated section, with extended powers to command and evaluate translations, was put in place much later, during 1940. The context in Uzbekistan resembled a political thaw, as the Uzbek Soviet Writers' Union had already reintegrated some banned writers at a junior level, and was even, very unusually for this period, beginning to use the language of rehabilitation.[64] The Uzbek Committee for Artistic Affairs, an offshoot of the Uzbek Sovnarkom (Council of People's Commissars, the body that effectively ran each Soviet republic), reinstated Mannon Uyg'ur to the Theatre Hamza and commissioned him to produce *Othello,* translated by G'afur G'ulom. The play was less susceptible to misinterpretation than *Hamlet*, and approved Russian translations were available.[65] The Committee for Artistic Affairs even agreed to pay G'afur G'ulom a second time (after Mannon Uyg'ur rejected his first translation), for a total of thirty-five thousand roubles. This was a colossal amount of money (even for Moscow), given that the usual salary for the translation of a play at this time was around one thousand roubles.[66]

As the Uzbek Sovnarkom was funding translators intensively, certain prominent writer-translators took the initiative to organise centralised supervision of translation activity within the Soviet Writers' Union to manage such funding; and to ensure it was used for translations both from Russian to Uzbek and from Uzbek to Russian. Hamid Olimjon, as First Secretary of the SSPUz, endorsed this initiative. The process was divided into two steps. First,

1941–1945' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Berkeley, 2015), pp. 126–27.

63 Abdulla Qahhor, 'Chekhovdan o'rganaylik' ('Let Us Learn From Chekhov'), *Qizil O'zbekiston*, 14 July 1939, p. 3 (p. 3).

64 O'zRMDA, R-2356, o. 1, d. 58, fols. 52r-55r ; Marc Élie, 'Ce que réhabiliter veut dire. Khrouchtchev et Gorbatchev aux prises avec l'héritage répressif stalinien', *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire*, 107:3 (2010), 101–13 (p. 102).

65 On *Othello*, see Jill Warren, 'Acculturating Shakespeare: The Tactics of Translating His Works under Stalin in the Light of Recent Theoretical Advances in Translation Studies' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Nottingham, 2015).

66 'Prokol n°7 Zasedanii Kollegii Upravleniia po delam iskusstv pri SNK UzSSR ot 20/XII-40 g', O'zRMDA, R-2087, o. 1, d. 54, fols. 1r-54r (10r-11r).

in February 1940, the SSPUz organised a competition for the best translation from Uzbek to Russian, with a focus on short stories. Other competitions would follow before an official translation section was established; the juries for these competitions were intended to become its future board, which would regularly and uniformly evaluate the translations.[67] The promoters emphasised the need to attract more professionals to work as translators, and to use the competitions as training, with the help of a strict peer-review process. To ensure their appeal, the competitions were generously funded, with a first prize of three thousand roubles, and a second prize of two thousand, both of which were substantial sums in comparison with usual wages.[68] The development of institutional supervision for translations was therefore more about seduction than coercion of applicants. In this new context, translation had become a high-value activity, both symbolically and materially. The jury was comprised exclusively of professionals, some of whom were both prominent authors and translators, like Oybek, Abdulla Qohhar and Maqsud Shayhzoda, president of the jury, or Mirzaqalon Ismoiliy (1908–86), a writer and translator from Russian to Uzbek who had been active since 1928. Other members included the Ukrainian dramatist Sofia Levitina (1891–1957), whose plays had been translated into Uzbek, and I. I. Vilenskii, a forgotten local Russian poet and novelist who was briefly in charge of the Russian section on, and editor-in-chief of, *Literaturnyi Uzbekistan* (1940–41).[69] Uzbek speakers dominated, and ideological restrictions were as minimal as possible.

The second step was the reorganisation of the whole structure of the Uzbek Soviet Writers' Union, including the formal creation of a translation section in May 1940. As expected, the academic Maqsud Shayhzoda, who had supported Olimjon during the latter's election as first secretary, was appointed as head of this section.[70] Jury members who held another institutional role, like Oybek, Qahhor, Vilenskii, and Levitina, were not full members, but retained an important role in decision-making (apart from Vilenskii, whose career was soon ended). The newcomers were mainly translators from Russian to Uzbek, such as Maqsud Davron, who was also a translator of French literature, and Sobir Muhamedov, who was translating Vassili Ian's *Gengis Khan* (1939, awarded a Stalin Prize in 1942).[71] As for translators from Uzbek to Russian, the section

67 'Protokol n°2 Zasedaniia Pravleniia Soiuza Sovetskikh Pisatelei Uzb. 16-go fevralia 1940', O'zRMDA, R-2356, o. 1, d. 63, fol. 58r-v.

68 Ibid.

69 I. I. Vilenskii was editor-in-chief of *Literaturnii Uzbekistan* until his novel *Piandzh shumit* (*The Sound of the River Piandzh*) was condemned and cancelled. 'Protokol n°14 zasedaniia Pravlenia Soiuza Sov. Pisatelei Uzbekistana, 30-go sentiabria 1940 g.', O'zRMDA, R-2356, o. 1, d. 63, fols. 126r-129r; 'Protokol n°5 zasedaniia Pravlenia Soiuza Sov. Pisatelei Uzbekistana, 6-go aprelia 1941 g.', O'zRMDA, R-2356, o. 1, d. 84, fols. 19r-20r.

70 Protokol n°8 Zasedaniia Pravleniia Soiuza Sovetskikh Pisatelei Uzb. 16-go maia 1940', O'zRMDA, R-2356, o. 1, d. 63, fol. 96r.

71 'Tematicheskii plan na 1941 g.', O'zRMDA, R-2356, o. 1, d. 86; fol. 1r.

recruited Vladimir Lipko (1912–80), a Ukrainian poet-translator, who was at that time translating Alisher Nawai's poetry in preparation for this national hero's jubilee, and Sotserdotova.[72] The latter's election to this board was a significant development. Everyone was aware at this time that she was the main translator into Russian of Abdulla Qodiriy.[73] Moreover, most of the members knew that she helped his family after his arrest, and even tried to intercede with the NKVD, writing to Stalin that he was no enemy of the people.[74] Her selection as a member of the board was therefore an implicit rehabilitation of Qodiriy. It is also further evidence that the institutionalisation and centralisation of translations cannot be considered as a coercive policy. Translations from Russian were the priority, as shown by the composition of the section and its first commissions, which consisted of 136 carefully chosen Lermontov poems.[75] Nonetheless, while translations from Russian were numerous, the Uzbek Soviet Writers' Union also inaugurated a training course on translations from Uzbek to Russian, and the journal *Literaturnyi Uzbekistan* published almost 200 translations of Uzbek literary texts in half a decade.[76]

The full publication schedule for 1940 gives a picture of the situation on the eve of the war. The Uzbek Soviet Writers' Union ordered the publication of 423,000 volumes of translated literature (47%), and 478,000 volumes of Uzbek literature (53%). In less than a decade, translated works had almost overtaken the local production.[77] This situation clearly shows the dominance of the Russian language in this cultural exchange, but it cannot be compared to extreme examples of Russian cultural hegemony, as in Estonia.[78] Within the category of Russian literature (380,000 volumes representing 90% of translations into Uzbek), the classics of the nineteenth century predominated. The works of Pushkin, Tolstoy, Lermontov, and Goncharov had a print run of 15,000 copies each. Party-approved contemporary Soviet novels such as Mikhail Sholokhov's *And Quiet Flows the Don* (*Tikhii Don*, 1925–32), translated by Sharif Rizaev as *Tinch oqar Don* (1938–42), and Nikolai Ostrovskii's *How the Steel Was Tempered*

72 'Protokol n°8 Zasedaniia Pravleniia Soiuza Sovetskikh Pisatelei Uzbekistana', 16-go maia 1940, O'zRMDA, R-2356, o. 1, d. 63, fol. 93r.

73 'Protokol n°1 sobraniia russkoi sektsii s aktivnom ot 19-go oktiabria 1937', O'zRMDA, R-2356, o. 1, d. 27, fols 1r-8r.

74 Habibulla Qodiriy, 'Qodiriyning so'nggi kunlari. Khotira qissaning davomi', *Yoshlik*, 6 (1989), 36–55 (36–37).

75 'Stikhi M. Iu. Lermontova, namechanye perevoda na uzbekskii iazyk', O'zRMDA, R-2356, o. 1, d. 63, fols. 134r-137r.

76 'Protokol n°16 Zasedaniia Pravleniia Soiuza Sovetskikh Pisatelei Uzbekistana, 30-go sentiabria 1940', O'zRMDA, R-2356, o. 1, d. 63, fol. 128r.

77 'Tematicheskii plan na 1941 g.', O'zRMDA, R-2356, o. 1, d. 86, fols. 1r-9r.

78 During the early Sovietisation of postwar Estonia, Russian translated literature exceeded 60% of the production. See Daniele Monticelli and Anne Lange, 'Translation under Totalitarianism: The Case of Soviet Estonia', *The Translator*, 20:1 (2014), 95–111 (p. 100); see also Anne Lange and Aile Möldre's essay in the present volume.

(*Kak zakalialas' stal'*, 1934), translated by Olimjon as *Po'lat qanday toblandi* in 1941, enjoyed the same circulation (10,000 copies) as the most widely printed contemporary Uzbek fiction. Maksim Gorky's works were the exception, with seven novels each printed in 20,000 copies. The Uzbek Soviet Writers' Union was thus following the centralised policy of translation development emphasised by the USSR Writers' Union at that time.[79]

Nonetheless, translated Soviet-Russian literature was still less widely printed than Uzbek contemporary writers or even nineteenth-century literature. For instance, the works of Ayni, founding father of both Uzbek and Tajik literature, enjoyed a very high print run, especially for the second edition of *The Slaves* (*Qullar,* 1934)—of which there were 15,000 copies. Only the poetry of Olimjon, who ran the SSPUz, enjoyed a similar print run, and with Ayni he dominated the contemporary literary landscape. Moreover, the plan included a newfound 'Uzbek literary classics' category. The nineteenth-century poets Muqimiy and Furqat, praised for their criticism of pre-Revolutionary powers, were printed in runs of 20,000 copies, equalling those for Gorky's works.[80] Interestingly, translations of Marxist-Leninist staples were not particularly supported. For instance, former Soviet Commissar for Enlightenment Anatolii Lunacharskii's translated works had a print run of just 5,000 copies, like the numerous translations of Azeri and Persian poets, whose appearance in translation can be interpreted as an affirmation of the Uzbek language in a traditionally bilingual context.[81] In this literary landscape, Uzbek folklore and literature remained prominent, while absorbing challenges from the translations, mainly from Russian. Publication policy strove for balance, aiming to intertwine federal and national literary traditions, with translations informing a global quest for Soviet cultural legitimacy.

In Wartime: Reshaping the Institution, Promoting Uzbek Literature

Wartime and evacuation led to profound institutional changes, as elements from the USSR's core were transferred towards the safe margins of the Soviet Empire. To prevent a takeover by powerful evacuees, Olimjon, as First Secretary of the SSPUz, resorted to large-scale recruitment and the promotion of apparently

79 A complete fascicle of the collection of the Uzbek Soviet Writers' Union consists of the instructions issued by the central Soviet Writers' Union concerning the 'reorganisation of the section of artistic translations' from 1939 to 1940; Postanovlenie Biuro natsional'nykh komissii SSP SSSR ob uporiadochenii dela khudozhestvennykh perevodov s iazykov narodov SSSR, perepiska po voprosu podgotovki kadrov', Tashkent, O'zRMDA, R-2356, o. 1, d. 51, fols. 1r-18r.

80 'Tematicheskii plan na 1941 g.', Tashkent, O'zRMDA, R-2356, o. 1, d. 86, fol. 3r.

81 Ibid., fol. 8r.

loyal colleagues. For this reason, in early January 1942, Svetlana Somova (1915–89) and Sotserdotova both gained full membership of the Uzbek Soviet Writers' Union. The Presidium elected Somova unanimously after flattering reports from both her reviewer, the freshly evacuated Russian writer Vladimir Lugovskoi (1901–57), who was already writing about Socialist Central Asia (and whose works were always quickly translated into Uzbek), and Olimjon himself.[82] Her work as a poet, including her major poem cycle about the city of Tashkent in 1941, was barely mentioned, while her academic writing and translations were heavily emphasised (she was the Russian translator of Hamid Olimjon, Oybek and Ayni). Although she was born in Leningrad, she had spent all her childhood in Central Asia, completing her higher education at the State University of Central Asia (SAGU), like most Uzbek writers of her generation. The circumstances of Sotserdotova's election are less detailed, as the document has been redacted; yet it is clear that the main argument in favour of her integration was her translation into Russian of Ayni's *The Slaves* and 'Uzbek classics'. Fearing that Uzbek literature could be subordinated during the evacuation, the Presidium of the SSPUz promoted these two translators regardless of their political antecedents and social backgrounds. Their appointments resulted in a change of priorities within the section, which henceforward aimed to promote Uzbek literature while mobilising the masses for the war effort, rather than translating Russian classics.

Six months later, evacuation was realised on a mass scale. The Uzbek Soviet Writers' Union remained, and Olimjon, although still First Secretary, was obliged to share the position with Isai Lezhnev (1891–1955), a *Pravda* journalist known for his aggressive stance during the Great Terror. Lezhnev took the unilateral decision to create new sections, and to reallocate the positions to empower evacuees. Some local writers therefore had to suffer a huge loss of authority, especially ethnically Russian and Ukrainian authors like Vladimir Lipko; but translators enjoyed an expanded section with four directors' posts.[83] Temur Fattoh (1910–63), Somova, Lev Pen'kovskii (1894–1971), and Aleksandr Il'chenko were placed in charge. The composition of this section is worth noting. First, it was the only such committee where locals were in the majority, Il'chenko being the sole evacuee (from Ukraine). Two worked primarily as translators of Uzbek literature, especially the work of Alisher Nava'i, into Russian, thus confirming the directional shift in translation policy. Thirdly, Somova became the first woman appointed to a directorial position in the whole Uzbek Soviet Writers' Union. Clearly, translation activity enabled women to gain positions of power in the highly masculine world of the Uzbek Soviet Writers' Union—the other route being a career within the Party, like Oydin Sabirova's (1906–53).

82 'Protokol n°1 Zasedaniia Pravleniia Soiuza sovetskikh pisatelei Uzbekistana 20 ianvaria 1942 g.', O'zRMDA, R-2356, o. 1, d. 93, fol. 2r.

83 'Protokol n°9 Zasedaniia Pravleniia Soiuza sovetskikh pisatelei Uzbekistana 5 iunia 1942 g.', O'zRMDA, R-2356, o. 1, d. 93, fols. 26r-30r.

This female poet and novelist had been a member of the Executive Committee of the SSPUz since its foundation, and she had gained prominence providing ideological training for Party cadres during the postwar years. Nonetheless, a translation career was no guarantee, especially for the wives of powerful writers: Zul´fiia Israilova (1915–96), better known as Zulfiya, despite her widely praised work as a translator of numerous Russian classic and contemporary poems, and her celebrated original poetry, received no influential appointments during her husband Hamid Olimjon's lifetime.[84] As for Kibriyo Qahhorova (1914–96), born Fayzullaeva, she had been a military translator before her wedding with Abdulla Qahhor in 1945, and started a career as a literary translator after the war. Nonetheless, she remained overlooked until the 1960s, not even being a member of the SSPUz.[85] Qahhorova still translated major works from Russian to Uzbek, and from Uzbek to Tajik, working both alone, as she did to translate Gorky's *Mother* (*Mat'*, 1906) (translated as *Ona* (1950)), and in collaboration with her husband, as she did on Tolstoy's *War and Peace* (*Voina i mir*, 1869). Its publication under the title *Urush va tinchlik* was serialised: she took part in the translation from 1947 onwards, and translated the fourth and final part alone.[86]

Hamid Olimjon had ensured that the translation section remained in the hands of local people. He was therefore able to promote Uzbek productions, although these were sometimes published in Russian before Uzbek. In 1943, his own play *Muqanna* was performed in both languages, and directed by Solomon Mikhoels (1890–1948), who had been evacuated to Tashkent with the Moscow State Jewish Theatre. While translations from Russian to Uzbek were numerous during the war, SSPUz also tried to promote Uzbek literature on a larger scale, with support from local Party officials. Translation activity was not understood only as receptiveness to world culture, especially Russian authors, but also as a way to transform Uzbek literature into the pearl in the Soviet crown with the help of the evacuees' work and connections. Hamid Olimjon's death in a car accident (a genuine accident as far as we know) in 1944 did not stop this effort, and the newly promoted Oybek stepped up this policy.[87] The evacuees themselves were not willing to impose Russian aesthetic standards upon Uzbek literature. In July 1942, examining issues with translation from Uzbek to Russian, the critic

84 The edition of the complete works of Zulfiya recorded no less than ninety-three translated poems, most of them from Russian (nine by Pushkin, six by Anna Akhmatova), others from 'brother' or friendly nations. Zul´fiia (Israilova), *Asarlar* (*Works*), ed. by Salohiddin Mamajonov, 3 vols (Tashkent: G'afur G'ulom nomidagi Adabiyot va san'at nashriyoti, 1985), II (1985), pp. 271–529.

85 Kibriyo Qahharova, *Chorak asr hamnafas* (Tashkent: Yosh Gvardiya, 1987), pp. 16–18.

86 Lev Tolstoy, *Urush va tinchlik*, trans. by Abdulla Qahhor and Kibriyo Qahharova (Tashkent: Adabiyot va san'at nashryoti, 1979).

87 As the assassination of Solomon Mikhoels in 1948 was disguised as a car accident, the death of Hamid Olimjon might be suspected of following the same pattern, but there is no evidence nor even any widespread rumour of it.

and editor Kornelii Zelinskii (1896–1970) insisted on the need to preserve the "national colour" of local literature, claiming Uzbek literature should remain "faithful to the traditional form" at all costs. Others criticised G'afur G'ulom for borrowing too much from Maiakovskii, claiming that it resulted in the loss of his own style after Shayhzoda had noted the specific translation issue of his poems repeating the same sentence or word in both Uzbek and Russian to emphasise the unbreakable bond between the people.[88] Finally, personal taste and affinity played a stronger role in the choices of translation. The rhythm of publication and the needs were too high for the Writers' Union, let alone the Party, to control the entire process. For instance, Oybek had a friendly relationship with Anna Akhmatova, and translated her 'Courage' ('Muzhestvo', 1942) as 'Mardlik'. Here again, he showed some ambiguity. 'Courage' is not only a war poem, but also an ode to the emancipating power of the language in a devastated cultural landscape. This was clearly a preoccupation that Oybek shared, as highlighted by his many attempts to correctly translate key passages of the poem in his draft, as well as his emphasis on the freedom of the language.[89]

Postwar: The Art of Passive Resistance (1945–49)

War had favoured the diversification of translation but also the promotion of a discreet cultural nationalism. The Uzbek Soviet Writers' Union enjoyed extensive autonomy until the last day of 1944, when the Party reaffirmed its control. Then the power struggle in the Politburo between Andrei Zhdanov and Georgii Malenkov led some local Party members to intervene in cultural policy to compete with one another, just as they did in Moscow or Leningrad.[90] Peace

88 'Protokol Zasedaniia Prezidiuma SSPUz 13-go iulia 1942 g.', O'zRMDA, R-2356, / o. 1, / d. 93, / fol. 31r, O'zRMDA, R-2356, o. 1, d. 93, fol. 33r.

89 The draft is kept in the collections of the Oybek House Museum. (There is no corresponding reference number.) See also Anna Akhmatova, 'Mardlik' ['Courage'], trans. by Muso Oybek, in Oybek, *Mukammal asarlar to'pladi*, 20 vols, XVII (1981), p. 210 (p. 210). In Russian, these last verses are "I my sokhranim tebia, russkaia rech', / Velikoe russkoe slovo. / Svobodnym i chistym tebia pronesem, / I vnukam dadim, i ot plena spasem / Naveki!" ("And we will preserve you, Russian speech, / Great Russian word / We shall carry you out pure and free / And give you to our grandchildren, and save you from prison / Forever!"). In Uzbek, these verses read: "Lekin seni saqlaymiz, rus tili, bir zum—/ Unutmaymiz, bu so'z ulug', boy. / Gard yuqtirmay erkin, go'zal, seni eltamiz, / So'ylar senda nabiralar, asoratdan biz, / Quqtarurmiz seni adabiy!" This can be back-translated as follows: "But we will preserve you, Russian language—even for a moment / We shall not forget you, great and plentiful word / And shall deliver you immaculate, free and beautiful, / Our grandchildren will speak within you, and we shall from captivity, / Save you forever!"

90 Denis Babichenko, *Pisateli i tsenzory: Sovetskaia literatura 1940-kh godov pod politicheskim kontrolem* (Moscow: Rossiia molodaia, 1994).

had not even been signed when Party members regained the initiative over the cultural field, including Iskhak Razzakov (1910–79), better known as the First Secretary of the Communist Party of Kirghizia (1950–61). Razzakov had spent all his early academic and political career in Uzbekistan. In 1945, as head of the Agitprop Department of the Uzbek Communist Party, he passed a resolution reaffirming Party control, allocating several tasks to the Uzbek Soviet Writers' Union, and announcing new financial measures. Having first congratulated the institution, he next accused it of several shortcomings, including neglecting translations, especially from Russian:

> The Bureau of the CK KP(b) and the SNK UzSSR jointly note that the work of the Uzbek Soviet Writers' Union retains major shortcomings. The Writers' Union does not mobilise its writers sufficiently for sustained work, does not develop literary criticism to any great extent, does not solve the problem of the lack of attention paid by writers and young literary cadres to their political and ideological education, does not take care of translations into Uzbek or Karakalpak of the great Russian writers, nor does it take care of the study, especially by young writers, of the classic works of Russian literature.[91]

In fact, since the evacuees had returned to Moscow or Leningrad, the translation section no longer existed, as the Soviet Writers' Unions was not able to afford it. The new resolution did solve the problem by allocating huge financial resources as well as new privileges to the Writers' Union. Next Razzakov commissioned translations of Pushkin, Lermontov, Gogol, Nikolai Chernyshevskii, Ivan Turgenev, Nikolai Nekrasov, Tolstoy, Chekhov, Gorky, Maiakovskii, Aleksei Tolstoy, and Sholokhov. Nonetheless, he did not abandon the promotion of Uzbek culture, as he also commissioned a large 'Anthology of Uzbek Literature'.[92] He also planned to reinforce the power of the Writers' Union over the Karakalpak territory by increasing translation from Karakalpak to Uzbek and Russian, soon commissioning a translation of the ancient Uzbek epic poem *Forty Girls* (*Kyrk-Kyz*) to be made by Svetlana Somova. It was published as *Sorok devushek* in 1949.[93]

---

91 'Postanovlenie Sovnarkoma UzSSR i Central'nogo Komiteta KP/b/Uz o rabote Soiuza Sovetskikh Pisatelei Uzbekistana (tov. Razakov).', O'zRMDA, R-2356, o. 1, d.102, fols. 2r-11r.

92 Ibid., fol. 7r; see also *Antologiia Uzbekskoi poezii*, ed. by Muso Aibek, Vladimir Lugovskoi, and Svetlana Somova (Moscow: Gosizdat, 1950).

93 The Karakalpak Autonomous Republic enjoyed a limited autonomy inside the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic, as well as limited privileges for the Karakalpak nationality. In 1946, the Uzbek Communist Party, supported by the Uzbek Soviet Writers' Union, reassessed its authority over the Autonomous Republic by deflecting the Zhdanov resolutions against the Karakalpak Communist Party and the local Writers' Union. See 'Protokol Zasedaniia pisatelei Kara-Kalpakii sovmestno s rabotnikami iskusstva i partiino-sovetskim aktivom', O'zRMDA, R-2356, o. 1, d. 111, fols. 12r-41r.

The Uzbek Soviet Writers' Union's response to Razzakov is meaningful. During the meeting it held to determine how to apply the Party's resolution, it welcomed Sergei Borodin (1902–74), a Russian author famous for his historical novel *Dmitri Donskoi* (1941; awarded a Stalin Prize the same year), as an envoy from the all-Soviet Writers' Union Plenum. Instead of supporting the Party line, Borodin suggested the creation of a "section dedicated to the popularisation of Uzbek literature throughout the USSR" instead.[94] Not only was Borodin, as a former evacuee, eager to promote Uzbek literature, but this viewpoint also enjoyed some support from the all-Soviet Writers' Union. Others, like the academic and Russian-Uzbek translator Jumanyoz Sharipov (1911–2007), embraced the Party line, and emphasised the section's future role in translating most Russian classics, starting with Tolstoy's *War and Peace*. The section finally compromised between these two positions. It was named very neutrally as "Translators' Section", and was entrusted to President Oybek's right-hand man, Shayhzoda, soon seconded by Nikolai Ivashev, known for his translation into Russian of G'afur G'ulom's short stories and Oybek's novels. A balance between languages and objectives was therefore established, and the newly founded section commissioned translations of Russian classics, as well as translations from Uzbek to Russian. The Presidium of the Uzbek Soviet Writers' Union had thus formally respected the Party's resolution while keeping the promotion of Uzbek literature as a priority.

Shayhzoda only occupied the key role as chairman of the section for a year before becoming involved in a major political scandal. His play *Jaloliddin*, which was acclaimed as patriotic during the war, was re-evaluated and condemned as an apology for feudalism. On 5 October 1946, Oybek was obliged to dismiss him as head of the translation section, appointing in his place another personal friend, the poet and translator Mirtemir Tursunov (1910–78), known simply as Mirtemir, who remained in charge until his own downfall in 1949 (when Oybek was fired as SSPUz director and excluded from the Academy of Sciences). Mirtemir did not change the section's policy, but reinforced the intergenerational transmission of skills. He entrusted the direction of a large collection of Chekhov's short stories to Abdulla Qahhor, regarded since the mid-1930s as the best Uzbek Chekhov specialist.[95] The Uzbek Soviet Writers' Union survived the publication of Zhdanov's resolutions condemning Leningrad journals for printing Anna Akhmatova, and even the NKVD officer Aziz Niallo (1904–93), who had played a key role in the repression during 1938, avoided criticising the President Oybek and Zulfiya for their translation of Akhmatova.[96]

94 'Protokol n°1 zasedaniia Pravlenia Soiuza Sov. Pisatelei Uzbekistana Tashkent, 6 sentiabria 1945', O'zRMDA, R-2356 o.1, d. 104, fol. 1r.

95 'Protokol n°10 zasedaniia Pravlenia Soiuza Sov. Pisatelei Uzbekistana Tashkent ot 10 oktiabria 1946', O'zRMDA, R-2356, o.1, d. 110, fol. 16r-21r.

96 Andrei Vladimirovich Stanishevskii, better known under his revolutionary name Aziz Niallo (Niallo standing for 'no Allah'), had been the head of the commission

Aziz Niallo then switched to attacking the more vulnerable young Russian writers of Uzbekistan, without succeeding in triggering a purge.[97] The strength of the Uzbek Soviet Writers' Union and its new networks inherited from the war, since Oybek's participation in the Presidium of the all-Soviet Writers' Union, were therefore a sufficient protection for writers and translators. In 1947, they even allowed Oybek to challenge the Tashkent Soviet Academy of Sciences, which had not yet issued the Russian-Uzbek encyclopaedic dictionary that the translators needed.[98]

Facing a Second Stalinism and the Cold War (1949–52)

The situation shifted in 1949. Stalin considered Uzbekistan too autonomous, and removed the head of the Party, who had protected the Uzbek intelligentsia, via a subtle policy of promotion.[99] The new Uzbek Party officials were all hardliners, like Mavlyan Vahabov (1908–91), a propaganda specialist promoted to Secretary of the Tashkent Obkom in 1950, a position he merged in 1951 with the direction of the Ministry of Culture.[100] Their competitions with each other generated an ideological overreach, which led to a new wave of repression, destroying both the Academy of Sciences and the SSPUz. Whereas translation activities had been a marginal issue during the Great Terror, they were a central concern of this second wave. The 'Republic's Conference on Questions of Literary Translation', held in Tashkent in 1952, shows a clear transformation in the discourse.[101] First, it raised active local political issues: the first speaker, Asqad Muhtor, attacked

in charge of examining the loyalty of the Uzbek Soviet Writers' Union in 1937–38. In 1938, having dismissed Majidiy and Alekseev in May, he was very reluctant to stop the purge process and tried to arrest some survivors, like Hamid Olimjon. His activity can be tracked in the letters he sent to the Soviet Writers' Union in Moscow. See *Mezhdu molotom i nakoval'nei. Soiuz sovetskikh pisatelei. Dokumenty i kommentarii*. I (1925-iiun' 1941 g.), ed. by Valentina Antipina, T. Domchareva, and Z. Vodapianova (Moscow: Rosspen, 2011), pp. 793–96.

97 'Zasedanie Russkoi Sektsii Soiuza Sovetsikh Pisatelei Uzbekistana 30 oktiabria 1946 goda', O'zRMDA, R-2356, o. 1, d. 120, fols. 1r-40v.

98 'Stenograficheskii otchët Obshche-gorodskogo sobraniia pisatelei Soiuza Sovetskikh Pisatelei Uzbekistana', 16 sentiabria 1946 goda, O'zRMDA, R-2356, o. 1, d. 112, fols. 6r-42r (15).

99 The First Secretary, Usmon Yusupov, who dismissed all of the charges against Uzbek intelligentsia, was recalled to Moscow, as were all high-ranking officials. See Claus Bech Hansen, 'Power and Purification: Late-Stalinist Repression in the Uzbek SSR', *Central Asian Survey*, 36:1 (2017), 148–69 (p. 148).

100 'Mavlian Gafarovich Vakhabov', *Obshestvenie nauki v Uzbekistane*, 3 (1991), 55–56.

101 'O masterstve perevoda, Respublinskoe soveshchanie po voprosam khudozhestvennogo perevoda ; iz doklada A. Mukhtara', *Zvezda Vostoka*, 6 (1952), 84–91.

prominent translators within the Uzbek Soviet Writers' Union, most of them close to Oybek like Shayhzoda or Mirtemir, and finally Oybek himself. Weakened, the former chairman of the SSPUz was now a target. His translations of Pushkin were, once again, at the centre of the debate. The question had been revived by the accusations in Russia against Isaak Nusinov and Mark Azadovskii, two academics who had been condemned for connecting the works of Pushkin to European literature rather than erroneously reframing him as a poet of pure Russian genius, as Russian nationalism demanded.[102]

By attacking Shayhzoda, Asqad Muhtor transposed Russian ultra-nationalism into the linguistic engineering of Uzbek. Just as Pushkin had been disconnected from any foreign roots, the Uzbek language had to be 'cleansed' of words of Persian origin, while Arabic-derived words were now too religious to be used. Whenever possible, words of Turkish origin or Russian borrowings were to be substituted. This linguistic programme crystallised in the condemnation of Shayhzoda's works, including his literary translations, as he was using a lot of them. Asqad Muhtor invoked the authority of Stalin, accusing some "Uzbek Marrists", like G'ulom Karimov, of "anti-scientific views"—that is to say, of having "falsely presented" the Arabic language as the "main literary language in Muslim lands during a long period". The Georgian-born comparative linguist Nikolai Marr had dominated Soviet linguistics until 1949, when Stalin condemned his theories, especially the "japhetic theory", which presumed a unity between languages through a shared origin. During the Cold War, Stalin replaced the Marrist quest for a universal language with Russian exceptionalism.[103] While the japhetic theory postulated that Caucasian languages were related to Semitic languages, Asqad Muhtor extended his accusation to all kinds of linguistic areas: having promoted the Turkish epics and, therefore, implicitly postulated a unity between Turkish languages and cultures, Hamid Olimjon himself was accused of having spread this theory. Shayhzoda appeared as the last link in the chain, having "applied Marrist theory in his translations of Pushkin, Shakespeare, and Maiakovskii" by using Persian and Arab words in his translations. Therefore, Shayhzoda was both a Marrist and an accomplice of the USSR's Cold War enemies, especially Iran. Furthermore, his lexical choices rendered him a "corruptor" of the language. Translation, in a key defining moment for the Uzbek language, had become the site of a death

102 Efim Etkind, *Bozhestvennii glagol. Pushkin, prochitannyi v Rossii i vo Frantsii* (Moscow: Iazyki russkoi kul'tury, 1999), p. 455.

103 The japhetic theory of Marr, supposing the existence of proto-languages, dominated Soviet linguistics until 1949, when Stalin rejected his theories, boosting the former's opponents. International observers interpreted this condemnation as an imperialist turn in Soviet linguistic policy. See Sébastien Moret, 'Marr, Staline et les espérantistes', in *Un paradigme perdu: la linguistique marriste*, ed. by Patrick Sériot (Lausanne: UNIL, 2015), 199–214 (p. 206); on the rise of Russian exceptionalism authoritatively grounded in classics, see David Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2002), pp. 197–213.

struggle between the supporters of an ethnic linguistic nationalism, which was very close to Russian nationalism, and the supporters of a more open linguistic landscape.

Study of lengthy extracts from back-translations demonstrated that Mirtemir's translations were inaccurate, as he did not respect the exact lexicon of the original: literalism as a guarantee of ideological rectitude was once again a distinct feature of the Uzbek literary landscape, although it had been banned from translations into the Russian language. The difference of status between languages was therefore increasing. Oybek, whose translation of *Eugene Onegin* was very accurate, was more difficult to attack, so his work was quickly condemned as not poetic enough. In the dual context of the Cold War and of the centre's attempt to control the periphery, translation activity was no longer a sufficient guarantee of ideological probity. The argument for accuracy, once invoked as a defence, was once again weaponised against translators. Pressure increased on Shayhzoda. In August, the case of the former right-hand man of Oybek was finally transferred to the NKVD.[104] Already accused of idealising the feudal past, Shayhzoda was now tarred with Pan-Islamism. Two months later, he was arrested, then sentenced to twenty-five years in a strict-regime labour camp.[105]

In addition to this requirement for rectitude, the speakers at the 1952 conference clearly demonstrate that two policies had been abandoned: the promotion of Uzbek literature, but also the promotion of the minorities of the USSR. Only translations from Russian and from foreign literatures into Uzbek were discussed. In fact, these were produced slowly. Complaints about productivity soon escalated. The Gosizdat (Soviet state publishing house) representative pointed out that the 1951 plan for publishing output was not yet fulfilled. For example, in March 1952, at the time of the conference, Abdulla and Kibriyo Qahhor had still not completed the second volume of their translation of *War and Peace* (*Urush va tinchlik*), while Mirtemir had promised to deliver his manuscript of Nekrasov's poem, 'Who is Happy in Russia?' ('Komu na Rusi zhit' khorosho?', 1866) before May 1950, yet he ultimately would not translate it until 1953 (as 'Rusiyada kim yaxshi yashaydi'), after Stalin's death.[106] As accuracy had become a strictly enforced requirement, and a potential weapon wielded

104 Rahmatulla Otaqo'zi, better known as Uyg'un, and Vladimir Milchakov, were at this time ruling the SSPUz. They sent thirty documents to the NKVD accusing him: 'Spisok materialov vydannykh organam', O'zRMDA, R-2356, o. 1, d. 109, fols. 1r-2v.

105 Shayhzoda was also the first former member of the SSPUz to be released from a labour camp after the death of Stalin. See Naim Karimov, *Maqsud Shayhzoda, Ma'rifiy—biografik roman* (Tashkent: Sharq, 2009), pp. 179–80, pp. 199–200.

106 A. Khodzhanov, 'O masterstve perevoda, Respublinskoe soveshchanie po voprosam khudozhestvennogo perevoda; iz vystupleniia A. Khodzhanova', *Zvezda Vostoka*, 6 (1952), 91–96 (p. 92).

against translators, the latter had become more prudent and thus slower in delivering their work, waiting instead for the repression to cease.

After critiquing translations from Russian to Uzbek, the speaker for Gosizdat pointed out the lack of translations into Uzbek of books awarded Stalin Prizes from foreign countries, especially oriental ones. Translations of literatures from other Soviet Republics, once a priority, were barely mentioned. 'Friendship between the peoples' was thus no longer understood as a pillar of federal culture, but as the core of the Soviet soft-power project abroad, with Uzbekistan its Eastern vanguard. At the same time, the promotion of Uzbek literature through new Uzbek-to-Russian translations, a policy which had resisted the Great Terror and even, paradoxically, benefited from the immediate postwar years, completely disappeared. During the 1952 conference, even Mikhail Sal'e (1899–1961), translator of the *Babur-nama*, the memoirs of the founder of the Mughal Empire, which had become a canonical text of Uzbek literature during the 1930s (its translation into Russian consecrating this process) did not utter a single word to promote translations from Uzbek to Russian.[107] Instead, he prudently commented on an anthology of Chekhov in translation edited by Abdulla Qohhar and published almost one year earlier. The balance between the promotion of Russian culture and the construction of a national one was disrupted, and, at least during late Stalinism, morphed into Russian hegemony.

Conclusion

Rather than linear development from a liberal to a fully supervised activity, the interaction between the institutionalisation process and the nature of Soviet multinational culture appears to be the result of small- and large-scale intricate power struggles, in the course of which the Soviet multinational model was constantly redefined, both in the centre and in the Uzbek periphery. In the Uzbek case, translations from Russian never outnumbered local creations,

107 From the late 1920s onwards, the categorisation of many Central Asian cultural figures as Uzbek in the interests of building a national culture was a major concern for both Soviet orientalists and Uzbek writers, whether Muslim reformists or proletarians. Abdurrauf Fitrat (1886–1938) included Babur in Uzbek literature in his essay 'A Global View of Uzbek Literature Since the 16th Century' ('XVI asrdan so'ngra o'zbek adabiyotiga umumiy bir qarash', 1928). His arrest did not interfere with the process: three years after the Great Terror, Hamid Olimjon officially identified Babur as the founding father of Uzbek prose. See Abdullarauf Fitrat, 'XVI asrdan so'ngra o'zbek adabiyotiga umumiy bir qarash', in Fitrat, *Tanlangan Asarlar* (*Selected Works*), ed. by Ozod Sharafiddinov, Naim Karimov and others, 5 vols (Tashkent: Ma'naviyat, 2000–2010), II (2010), pp. 55–61; 'Stenograficheskii otchët po obsuzhdeniiu romana *Sviashchonaia krov*' i p'esa Do'stlar', O'zRMDA, R-2356, o.1, d. 88, f. 1^{r}-4^{v}. On Fitrat, see Edward Allworth, *The Preoccupations of 'Abdalrauf Fitrat, Bukharan Nonconformist: An Analysis and List of His Writings* (Berlin: Das Arabische Buch, 2000).

but the difference of status between the two languages is highlighted in many other ways. First, the Uzbek Soviet Writers' Union executives tried to pay equal attention to translations from Russian as to translations into Russian, in order to consecrate Uzbek literature in the dominant language. Meanwhile, they appropriated Soviet policies and funding for their own purposes, using translations to accumulate cultural capital in a way that recalls the anti-colonial concerns of the Jadids decades earlier. Not only did they promote their emerging national literature through translation, but they tried through translation to appropriate works considered part of world cultural heritage, as well as writings by other ethnic minorities. This strategy was successful during wartime, and even supported by some Party officials, but it was harshly repressed between 1949 and 1952, when translations from Russian clearly dominated the cultural landscape, in line with the Russian nationalism promoted in the centre. The inequality of cultural transfers is also clearly illustrated by the changes in translation aesthetics. While translations into Russian disqualified literalism and were increasingly oriented towards 'free translation' when the USSR asserted itself as a major power, translations from Russian to Uzbek, once target-oriented, shifted to a source-oriented approach at the end of the 1930s and to a strict literalism during the postwar period, with small discrepancies viewed as political faults. Writers posed a subtle resistance to this evolution: praising (like Oybek or Ayni) the translated works in ambiguous ways; deliberately choosing (like Cho'lpon) anticolonial novels to translate; or simply delaying the translation process (like Abdulla and Kibriyo Qahhor). Others, like Asqad Muhtor, instrumentalised this evolution to nurture linguistic nationalism. The extent of the Thaw in 1950s Uzbekistan must now be considered in the light of translations, with a possible return to a target-oriented aesthetic of translation highly significant in the context of what came before.